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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 158 (*continued*)

Declaration by the United Nations of 8 and 9 May as days of remembrance and reconciliation: special solemn meeting in commemoration of all victims of the Second World War

The President (*spoke in French*): This morning, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 59/26 of 22 November 2004, the Assembly will hold a special solemn meeting in commemoration of all victims of the Second World War.

On 22 November 2004, the General Assembly filled a need by adopting, without a vote, resolution 59/26, which declared 8 and 9 May as a time of remembrance to pay solemn tribute to all victims of the Second World War, which plunged mankind into chaos, oppression and barbarism. Sixty years ago, at the end of that horrendous tragedy, which claimed more than 100 million victims, the international community decided, on the basis of the lessons it had learned from that terrible conflict, to create a world organization — the United Nations, our common home — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The Assembly thus decided to commemorate officially the end of one of the darkest episodes in human history.

I therefore welcome the praiseworthy initiative of those Member States that have already marked this important event or that are preparing to organize events both to honour the memory of all the victims and to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations, which, as members know, we shall be commemorating throughout 2005.

I believe that it is necessary in this year of remembrance to recall that tragedy and the untold horrors and suffering that it inflicted on humankind and to draw from this painful past lessons of hope that will enable us to build a glorious future. To ensure that this memory will serve its purpose — both to remind and to teach — we must not be afraid to open our eyes to that inglorious period of human history. But it would certainly be no less mistaken solely to look back into the past while ignoring the hope of a better future for succeeding generations.

This commemoration must therefore serve as an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. The General Assembly, this ultimate democratic forum in which all members can express themselves freely, must reaffirm its commitment to reject war as a way to settle conflicts between nations. That commitment strikes a particular chord today, when millions throughout the world continue to suffer the evil of armed conflict.

That is why the official commemoration of the end of the Second World War must be an occasion for all of us to continue steadily to reflect on the meaning of the simple, essential values of dialogue and tolerance among women, men and entire peoples of all countries, of all regions and of all continents.

I call now on the Deputy Secretary-General.

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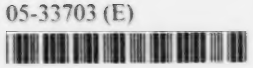

The Deputy Secretary-General: It is entirely appropriate that the General Assembly should commemorate with all due solemnity the end of the Second World War in Europe. As the opening words of the Charter remind us, the Second World War brought untold sorrow to mankind. The scourge of war, so constant in human history, reached unprecedented levels in the mechanized murder of millions of men, women and children and in the spread of destruction to almost the entire world. The descent into the abyss spared no one.

The end, when at last it came, unleashed a flood of feelings: jubilation mixed with mourning; revelry gave way to sober reflection. Some survivors found in their deliverance from fear and oppression evidence that a miracle had occurred. Others declared that faith itself had been demolished forever.

The work of rebuilding lives and families, societies and cities, was taken up with inspiring vigour. So was the task of repairing the fabric of international relations. As the end of the war came into view, delegates gathered in San Francisco to draft this Organization's founding Charter. As they pursued their work, a quick succession of events — the liberation of the death camps, the advance of Allied armies, the downfall of the Nazi regime — brought new hope to a world wearied by years of conflict.

As fascism fell, the United Nations rose. As the ashes settled and the dust cleared, among the new features of the landscape was a new organization designed to better manage the world's affairs and, most of all, to help prevent such catastrophes from happening ever again.

The Russian poet Leonid Leonov summed up the outcome of the Second World War with the words "We have defended not only our lives and our property, but also the very notion of a human being". That is the most important task that continues to challenge us today: to defend the notion of humanity. So, as we look back today to honour the dead and to pay our respects to the heroes — soldiers and citizens — who ultimately overcame tyranny, let us also look ahead and reaffirm our commitment to the goal of building a world fit for humankind. That is the best tribute we can pay to the millions who perished in the Second World War.

Our work is never done. We are undefeated only because we have continued trying. That is the work of the United Nations and the reason we are here today. Let us ensure that we all remain committed to that shared mission.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call now on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

In 2005, the whole civilized world is celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. That war, unprecedented in its magnitude and cruelty, became the greatest tragedy for the nations of Europe and the rest of the world, regardless of the side on which States were fighting. In many countries, every family and every human destiny was affected by the consequences of the war. For us, it was the Great Patriotic War: a sacred war against enslavement, for life and for the independence of our peoples.

We are proud that the peoples of our countries made the decisive contribution to the victory over the enemy and to saving humanity from Nazi enslavement. We pay tribute to the huge role played by all the States of the anti-Hitler coalition in the defeat of fascism. Tens of millions of people gave their lives for that victory.

Today, we bow our heads in commemoration of those who died on the battlefields, in the death camps, in cities and in villages. We are all eternally indebted to those who perished in the just fight for freedom and human dignity. We pay great tribute to the veterans of the Second World War.

We are convinced that the development of humanity should not be accompanied by woes and by victims of new wars. Our first duty to those who spilled their blood to save humanity from Naziism is, first and foremost, to erect a reliable barrier to halt the spread of intolerance and related contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

The perception of the victory in the Second World War as a common value for all of humanity enables us to leave the era of animosity and alienation in the past. That is very important both to preserve the historical memory of nations and to strengthen humankind's unity in the face of new and dangerous challenges and threats. The main lesson of the war is

that, at a decisive moment for the fate of humanity, States with differing political systems were able to put aside their differences and to unite their efforts in the fight against a common enemy.

The experience of international brotherhood-in-arms during the years of the war is particularly relevant today, when civilization faces another lethal challenge, this time from international terrorism. It is only through unity, mutual respect and trust and on a solid legal basis that we can succeed in the fight against that evil and other global threats.

The lessons of the Second World War are no less relevant for shaping a post-war world order and for the future of international relations. The desire to save humanity from the scourge of war inspired the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition to create a reliable mechanism to maintain international peace and security: the United Nations. Its Charter has become a universally recognized basis for contemporary international law and a fundamental code of behaviour for States and international organizations. The principles and norms of the Charter, which withstood the trials of the cold war, remain the only basis for establishing a new, safer and just world order.

Further strengthening the role and the efficiency of the United Nations as the key element in the collective security system meant to achieve the noble Charter goal of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war is in the common interests of all of humanity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Luxembourg, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Sixty years ago, the cannons fell silent in Europe, marking the end of the most terrible and bloodiest conflict that humanity has ever known. Millions of men, women and children, citizens of many nations, saw their lives engulfed and crushed by the horrific machinery of war. Only a few weeks ago, we assembled in this very Hall to commemorate the liberation of the Nazi camps and to pay tribute to the memory of the innumerable victims of those factories of death. Today, as on that occasion, the international community is meeting in this symbolic place to say no to the ideologies of hatred, intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, conquest and domination that were the origin of that global conflagration, "which brought untold sorrow to mankind", as stated so eloquently in resolution 49/25, adopted by the General Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

The memory of the Second World War, which caused such upheaval in the lives of peoples and of millions of individuals, truly testing the limits of human civilization, must not be limited to the mere recollection of history. That memory must continue to be a vital and constant appeal to all of humanity to rise above destructive antagonisms and to mobilize its energies and utilize its spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical resources to put an end to the scourge of war and to all violations of human dignity.

In that context, the duty of memory obliges us to recall with respect all the innocent victims of the war and their legacy. For, as the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights so nobly recalls,

> "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". (*resolution 217 (III) A*)

Thus, today's commemoration is an occasion to recall once again the basic values that guided the creation of the United Nations, our inestimable common heritage, whose Charter embodies and expresses essential lessons. At a time when the international community is seriously discussing ways and means to enable the Organization to better face the many challenges of our era, that powerful inspiration must continue to guide us.

Indeed, since the end of the Second World War, constant efforts have been essential to put an end to human rights violations and to lack of respect for democracy. Ensuring lives of dignity for all remains an indisputable mission for the international community. By meeting those challenges in a creative and dynamic

way, we can show ourselves to be worthy of our heritage and can fully learn the lessons of the Second World War, the terrible war that tore apart all of humanity.

In that regard, let us recall the moving words of the first President of the General Assembly, the eminent European statesman Paul-Henri Spaak, who, on 11 January 1946, declared in his presidential address:

> "For years these tens of millions suffered, endured, accepted hardships and sacrificed, and now they ask for their reward. The reward for which they ask is peace, a just and enduring peace, and that is what we must bring them". (*Official Records of the General Assembly, First part of first session, Plenary Meetings, 2nd meeting*)

Today more than ever before, the United Nations and the principles enshrined in the Charter are the very foundations of the maintenance of security, peace and development and a guarantee of the fundamental rights of the individual.

9 May is also Europe Day. At the end of the war, a group of eminent European personalities chose, in a deliberate and visionary manner, to alter the dire course of European history that had led to two destructive confrontations in less than 30 years, and to launch a project for peace and prosperity that would eventually become the European Union. The lessons of the Second World War are clearly enunciated in the preamble of the treaty which formed the basis of the future European Union, as announced on 9 May 1950 by the statesman Robert Schuman in his famous declaration. The preamble affirms the will of European States to commit themselves, in real and deep reconciliation,

> "to substitute for age old rivalries the merging of their essential interests; to create, by establishing an economic community, the basis for a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts; and to lay the foundations for institutions which will give direction to a destiny henceforward shared".

That inspiration remains the foundation and lodestar of the European Union in world affairs and in its actions and policies. By increasing its integration and gradually expanding, the European Union transcends the continent's divisions and contributes to building peace and stability in a world that was too often marked by the scourge of war.

Today's commemoration is an occasion for us to bow to the memory of the countless innocent victims and to consider the lessons of an event that profoundly traumatized Europe and the world. It is also an opportunity solemnly to reaffirm the essential values that form the basis of our common action in the United Nations, renewed in the service of its peoples. That is our duty and our commitment.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr. Adam Daniel Rotfeld.

Mr. Rotfeld (Poland): There can hardly be a more noble cause for us to meet in this Hall than this commemoration meeting. The initiator — the delegation of the Russian Federation — should be commended for taking the lead in that respect.

On the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the most horrific war in human history, we are looking back at what happened between September 1939 and May 1945. The reason is two-fold: to commemorate the many millions of victims of the Second World War and remember its terrifying atrocities and destruction, and to ask ourselves whether that chapter of history was completely closed for everyone in May 1945.

I stand before the Assembly as the representative of a nation that lost over six million citizens, among them over three million Jews and Poles of Jewish descent. By decision of the great Powers, taken at the conferences in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam, the territory of Poland was moved to the West. The population of Poland decreased from 35 million in 1939 to 24 million in 1945; the country's territory shrunk by 20 per cent. We lost 40 per cent of our national assets, with many cities and towns completely destroyed, including Warsaw, the capital of my country.

Those are just dry statistics. They conceal the untold tragedy of millions of human beings. I speak as someone who as a child witnessed and still remembers the most extreme cruelties. During the war, the Nazis murdered my parents and my whole family. I mention that because, in Poland, my wartime fate was typical. It was shared by millions of people — in fact, the whole of Polish society. So when I bow my head today to those who vanquished the Nazi Third Reich, it is not an

empty gesture, but an expression of awareness that the victory saved millions of human lives.

Millions of young Poles and Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians, Englishmen and Americans gave their lives so that nations could live in peace, security and respect for human rights. To commemorate that day, the leaders of our States are meeting today in Moscow. They are paying tribute to the millions of soldiers and civilians who perished. Two days ago in this Hall, we paid that tribute through the wonderful music of the Leningrad Symphony of Dmitry Shostakovich.

The Second World War brought terrible experiences to many nations. For us Poles, it started on 1 September 1939 when we were treacherously attacked from the West and the South by Nazi Germany; two weeks later, on 17 September, aggression from the East was committed by the Stalinist Soviet Union. That invasion marked the fulfilment of an infamous conspiracy known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which had been signed in Moscow on 23 August, a week before the German attack. It was the most tragic period in the history of the Polish State. That conspiracy resulted in untold human and material losses.

The list of Nazi crimes is long and terrifying. Hitler's regime created apparitions unseen before, even in the worst of nightmares. Genocide and the Holocaust branded the history of the twentieth century. The names of the camps — Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno on the Ner, Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka, Dachau — will forever bring to our mind the darkest side of human nature. The crimes of Stalinism were also horrific. For us Poles, their most shocking example was the murder of 22,000 Polish officers, prisoners of war whose ashes lie in the cemeteries of Katyn, Miednoye and Kharkov.

We are sometimes told that the criminal plot of the two dictatorships — Stalin's and Hitler's — was legitimate under the international law of the time and, what is more, that it constituted a justified or even essential defence in view of the Munich Agreement concluded in September 1938 among Nazi Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and France. That treaty was designed to channel German aggression eastward. True, it was a shameful agreement conceived to appease the aggressor at the expense of Czechoslovakia. The Munich Agreement has found a highlighted place in dictionaries of international law and international relations as an example of an unjust treaty imposed upon a third party against its will. It should be noted here that all its signatories ultimately recognized — during the war or afterwards — that it had been invalid from the very beginning.

It would be highly desirable if, 60 years after the war and 66 after the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, we could all agree that the Pact was contrary to law and justice and recognize all its consequences as invalid from the very beginning. Any attempt to defend the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact would constitute a startling combination of legal ignorance and political arrogance.

Our Organization was born out of the experiences of the war. We often repeat the first words of the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations: "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime, has brought untold sorrow to mankind". We remember that it was the goal of the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". Another goal defined by the Charter was "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained".

I cite those well-known, and frequently repeated, words of the preamble because 60 years ago, when they were drafted, it seemed that we were entering a new world of respect for law, justice and human dignity. For the nations liberated by the armies of the democratic members of the anti-Nazi coalition — that is, for France and the western part of Germany, for Norway and Greece, for Belgium and Holland and for Denmark, Austria and Italy — that promise became a reality. Unfortunately, fate was not as generous to Poland and other States of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The end of the war and the fall of the Third Reich did not bring to Poles the full sovereignty and the independence they were fighting for. The 1945 Yalta decisions, taken over the heads of Poles by the three major Powers of the anti-Nazi coalition, in effect allowed the subjugation of Poland by Stalin's dictatorship. The same fate was shared by other nations of Central and Eastern Europe.

The first days of joy on regaining freedom gave way to 45 years of the subjugation of those States through an imposed regime of violence and lawlessness, of trampling human dignity and of total subordination to the rule of Stalin's Soviet Union. As a British historian wrote recently, there is a tendency to praise the war as an unconditional success and as a wonderful enterprise that ended with the liberation of the world from evil. He went on to say that, in the eastern half of Europe, one foul tyranny was driven out by another, and liberation was postponed for nearly 50 years.

I do not stand at this rostrum to present a certain view of wrongs or to make claims. On the contrary, I wish to pay tribute to all the soldiers from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other nations who fought in the ranks of the Red Army, for their heroism, dedication and sacrifice. Let me assure the Assembly that the valiant deeds of those hundreds of thousands of nameless heroes are held in the highest esteem in Poland. Their graves are properly cared for and their memory is kept alive.

The victory of 60 years ago was also the work of Poles. We have a prominent place among the defenders of the free world. Poland was the first to oppose Nazi aggression. We fought on all fronts of the Second World War and, at the end of the war, the contribution of the Polish military was the biggest after that of the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom.

It happens that 2005 will be replete with anniversaries: the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps, the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Solidarity movement in Poland, which set off the process of peaceful and democratic transformation in many States in our part of the world. That process brought to an end the post-war division of Europe, and the real end of the war that had started in 1939.

The people of Poland will not be lacking in commitment in reaching understanding and reconciliation with all nations, particularly with our largest neighbours, the Germans and the Russians. Reconciliation is possible only when there is mutual striving and mutual good will. I repeat: we shall not be lacking in either of them.

The day before yesterday, 7 May, in Wrocław, the President of Poland said, "to remember is to understand history, drawing lessons from it and living by its precepts". This day of commemoration should also be a day of reflection. Historical memory is enlightening and creative only when it expresses the truth, without omissions and without exaggerating certain themes and glossing over others. That is how we should talk about the years of the war and Victory Day itself. We want reconciliation based on truth, because reconciliation is possible only through truth and a common understanding of history.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on General Sagadat Nurmagambetov, representative of Kazakhstan and a veteran of the Second World War.

Mr. Nurmagambetov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to greet my fellow participants in this General Assembly meeting, which is being held in commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Today's meeting celebrates a truly unique historical event. It gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to those who fought for peace, freedom, democracy and human dignity, and to remember the victims of a fascist regime.

We have gathered here today to pay tribute to all those who perished in the Second World War. We remember, and should always remember, those who fought on the battlefield, who worked back home or who died in concentration camps to preserve life on our planet.

As a person who was directly involved in that war, marched thousands of war miles, participated in the liberation from fascism of a number of European countries and saw the end of the war in Berlin, I can affirm that it was a destructive and bloody war that caused the human race incalculable losses and great suffering. It is impossible to overestimate the services of the men and women who fought in the armed forces or worked back home, who sacrificed their energy and lives and made great efforts to achieve the main goal, our victory. That great victory of 1945 was forged by all the constituent Soviet republics, Russia and the other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, people realized that a third world war would mean the end of civilization for future generations. The establishment of the United Nations at that juncture, which was

critical to the new world order, was a vitally important and historic decision. The ideals that made people sacrifice their lives are embodied in the preamble of the Charter. From the very beginning, the United Nations has worked to accomplish its main tasks, namely, to maintain peace, promote social progress and development and improve standards of life.

This year, the sixtieth anniversary of the Second World War, is also the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. Today, 60 years since the end of that war, the world once again faces new serious threats to its security that have acquired new forms and truly global dimensions and that cross national borders. The world today faces the threat of terrorism and transnational crime. Conflicts continue to rage in many parts of the world, while humankind continues to live under the spectre of poverty and the degradation of the environment.

In that context, I would like to stress once again the importance of efforts to maintain peace. The world is indivisible. If we turn it into an arena of strife, confrontation and armed conflict, that would mean that the mistakes of the past can be easily forgotten. We, the surviving participants of the Second World War and direct witnesses to those tragic events, should not allow their repetition, because virtually every page of that war's history was written in the blood of millions of people.

One cannot find a single family in Kazakhstan that has not been affected, one way or another, by the Second World War. Even though the hostilities took place beyond the territory of Kazakhstan, our people underwent a terrible ordeal. Our Republic mobilized for the army some 1.2 million of its sons and daughters; more than half of them sacrificed their lives.

Victory was achieved not only on the battlefield but also at home. In an unbelievably short period of time, our Republic set up systems for the production of ammunition and armaments and hosted many industrial enterprises relocated from the war zones. Its rural workers made a considerable contribution to helping those who were fighting the enemy. Kazakhstan took in thousands of people of different ethnic backgrounds who had been evacuated from war zones. They were met with traditional brotherly hospitality and given shelter and jobs, and sympathy and generosity were shown to them, especially with regard to children.

It was during those difficult war years that the friendship and cohesion between the various ethnic groups living in our country were strengthened. Today, this extremely important factor has continued to contribute to a large extent to the preservation and consolidation of inter-ethnic harmony and stability in our society.

Kazakhstan has consistently been implementing large-scale political, economic and social reforms in order to establish a modern, democratic State based on the rule of law, and it has made a tangible contribution to regional and global stability and security.

In conclusion, I would like to call on the leaders of all States Members of the United Nations to continue to work tirelessly towards the consolidation of peace. By fulfilling our obligations in the area of human rights, security and social and economic development, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations and other fundamental documents of the Organization, we will be able to immortalize and fully honour those who sacrificed their lives in the interests of peace, freedom and human dignity for future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): The end of the war in Europe 60 years ago was a turning point. It led to the construction of the General Assembly Hall and to the work that goes on within it. The war left the European continent, in the words of one historian, "a landscape with ruins". The graveyards of Europe and war memorials in every town in my country are testament to the human loss and to the sacrifice that was made to help save Europe and the world from barbarism. The economic and physical damage was also immense. Recovery would take years. We should never forget the cost of war.

But among the ruins and the despair, there was hope and determination. Europeans resolved never again to go to war with one another. The United States, in an act of generosity and vision, provided the shattered European countries with economic help and a security guarantee. Within five years of 1945, France and Germany were laying the foundations of a European economic community, sharing sovereignty to strengthen their security.

Europe and the United States, and the other nations touched by war, did not just look inward, however. The establishment of this Organization, the United Nations, was the ultimate practical expression of shared hopes for a better world. The commitment in the Charter's preamble, often quoted this morning, was "to save successive generations from the scourge of war". This has been only partly achieved. Almost every country represented in this Hall today has suffered, directly or indirectly, from conflicts, within States or between them, since 1945.

We face threats today — terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, catastrophic disease, climate change — arguably more drastic and less easily confronted than those faced by our founding fathers, and the threat posed by poverty, which they knew, is still with us today.

But we should recall that the war in Europe ended, and the United Nations was founded, in an era of hope, and we have every reason to be hopeful today. A total of 191 nations belong to the United Nations family. More than ever before, they represent a community of democracies committed to the respect of fundamental human rights called for in our Charter.

More than ever, we have the resources, technology and experience to promote development, enhance security, advance human rights and strengthen the rule of law. More than ever, we have shared interests in doing so.

We have in the Secretary-General's "In larger freedom" report an ambitious prospectus — a challenge to our leaders to renew the United Nations by embracing an agenda for genuine change and achievement. In 2005, too many parts of our shared world still resemble the "landscape with ruins" that was Europe 60 years ago. This is particularly the case in Africa. But abuse and neglect — natural and man-made — is too prevalent on every continent, and our planet is menaced by the damage that we do to our common environment.

My Government's hope — one which guides our actions in the European Union, the Group of Eight (G-8) and here at the United Nations — is that together we can rise to the challenge of refreshing this landscape across the world, as our predecessors did in post-war Europe. To that end, we should work towards agreements at our summit in September which will represent real progress on delivering the goals set out in the United Nations Charter — peace and security, economic and social advancement, human rights for all, justice and the rule of law across the world.

On this Day of Remembrance, our thoughts are with those who suffered and sacrificed their lives for our freedom and thus for the goals of the United Nations Charter. But our hopes and determination should be focused on our common future and on the progress that, in this General Assembly Hall, we all have agreed to achieve.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): It is indeed fitting that the Assembly is meeting to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The Organization rose out of the devastation of that terrible experience, and its noble mission was crafted as a response to its unspeakable horrors, which shocked the conscience of humankind.

The very first paragraphs of the United Nations Charter are testimony to the indelible link between the Organization and the unique tragedy of the Second World War. They remind us, as so many before me have already recalled, that the founding principles of the United Nations — "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights [and] in the dignity and worth of the human person" — are the world's answer to the tragedy of that war; they are articles of faith and a moral imperative that can never be abandoned.

We meet today to say to the millions of victims of the war that we have not forgotten their slaughter, to say to the survivors of the war's atrocities that we have not forgotten their suffering and to say to the Allied soldiers that we have not forgotten their sacrifice and that we will never forget.

The courageous soldiers from numerous States represented in this Hall who risked, and too often gave, their lives for goodness and compassion came face to face with the devastation wrought by man's potential for cruelty. They came face to face with darkness incarnate. And they came face to face with the ultimate depths of suffering and misery.

Israel, along with all others represented in this Hall, is grateful to all those soldiers who fought for freedom, hope and the faith that humanity could be redeemed and reborn from the inferno of the Second World War — and is especially grateful to those

soldiers who went off to fight for those ideals and did not return, including soldiers of a yet unborn nation but of an ancient people, who served in the Jewish Brigade and other units of the Allied forces.

Israel has an especially tragic connection to the Second World War. The State of Israel represents a people that has endured hardships throughout history but which suffered its worst calamity during the Second World War. The Holocaust represented the murder of one third of the Jewish people. Amid the darkness and despair of those war years, so many of our parents and grandparents were engulfed in the flames of hatred and were lost to us forever.

Like the United Nations itself, the State of Israel was born out of the tragedy of the Second World War, with the determination never to forget and never to allow the events of the war to reoccur. Twenty thousand veterans of the Second World War reside in Israel. Together with the Holocaust survivors they live alongside, they are living witnesses to that terrible time in history, reminding us that when the seeds of hatred are sown, only horror and death can grow. We are proud of the veterans of the war who live in Israel; proud of their courage and their sacrifice on the battlefields of Europe and proud that they continue to honour all those victims of the Holocaust by making Israel their home.

On behalf of those veterans and all of Israel's citizens, Israel's President, Moshe Katsav, is leading the Israeli delegation to the commemoration c monies taking place in Moscow today. Having played such a crucial role in the liberation of Europe from the Nazis and having suffered so severely, in terms of both military and civilian losses, our Russian colleagues should be proud of their incalculable contribution to the struggle against evil. On that note, and on behalf of the Jewish people, let me pay special tribute to the Russian soldiers who, along with soldiers from other States, liberated the Nazi concentration camps.

Today provides an opportunity to reaffirm once again the principles upon which the United Nations was founded. Born out of the horrors of the Second World War, it was envisioned as a temple of tolerance and harmony. It should be a home to all nations of the world — inclusive, just and working to foster peace between peoples. It should be divorced from politics and committed to brotherhood. By working to ensure that it is so, we can commemorate the end of the Second World War not just today but each and every time we meet in this Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rock (Canada): Sixty years ago, Canada's ambassador to the United States was attending the founding conference of this Organization in San Francisco when he was told that victory in Europe had been achieved. Lester B. Pearson wrote in his diary that day,

> "Those who were trying to organize the peace were hardly conscious that fighting in Europe had ended, no doubt in part because we were facing the Pacific, where the war was raging bloodily. I went to my room and tuned in a very moving programme from London. It was the first time I realized what VE Day really meant".

Like many of his colleagues in San Francisco, Lester Pearson was determined that such catastrophic events should never happen again. So, it was his generation of diplomats and leaders that established the United Nations out of the ashes of war six decades ago.

In 1939, when the war began, Canada had a tiny population on a vast area of land. When the war ended six years later, Canada had the fourth largest fighting force in the world. We then turned our efforts to building a new country and contributing to the peaceful development of the world around us, and we embraced and supported the United Nations in every way we could.

(*spoke in French*)

On 22 September 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin spoke here before the General Assembly about what he considered the international system's main responsibilities: the responsibility to protect — to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity; the responsibility to deprive terrorists of weapons of mass destruction; the responsibility to respect human beings, their dignity, their freedom and their culture; the responsibility to build — because genuine development requires an integrated approach towards debt, market access and social investment; and responsibility towards the future with respect to certain aspects of our common patrimony — health, the environment, the oceans and outer space.

(*spoke in English*)

As the Prime Minister emphasized last September, Canadians strongly believe that those responsibilities can be addressed only collectively, through the United Nations.

The past six decades since 9 May 1945 have seen growth and change in this institution. But we are all aware that much remains to be done if we are to make this institution all it can be and fulfil the promise and the expectations its founders had in 1945.

We owe it to ourselves and to the citizens of the world to work for change and progress in this great institution, to be no less bold than those who worked in the shadow of war 60 years ago and to do in our generation what they did in theirs: to take concrete and courageous action to advance ideals towards their practical expression.

On the solemn occasion of this historic anniversary, Canada commits itself anew to working with other Member States in that common cause.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mrs. Patterson (United States of America): I am pleased to represent the United States today at this special meeting of the General Assembly commemorating the victims of the Second World War and of the Holocaust. Our act of remembrance today must be repeated so that the scourge of war, hatred and intolerance is not repeated. The United Nations was founded to ensure that such horror and suffering would not take place again.

For the people of the United States, like those of many nations, the end of the Second World War was a momentous event. Tyranny and oppression were defeated, and a new day of hope dawned — but not without enormous cost. It is appropriate, then, that we should take this opportunity to remember the tremendous sacrifice of countless citizens of many countries during those terrible years.

We should recall that, 60 years ago, United States divisions liberated major death camps in Buchenwald and Dachau in Germany, and in Mauthausen in Austria. British forces liberated Bergen-Belsen and Neuengamme, while Soviet forces liberated Auschwitz in Poland and the Sachsenhausen and Ravensburg camps in Germany.

The Second World War is central to the American identity. It is, for us, as it is for many, a time that will forever remain fixed in the nation's collective memory. Today, 60 years later, we remember loved ones lost and recount stories of their great heroism and valour. We honour their memories and continue to celebrate the victory of the alliance. We reflect on the lessons of this great conflict and give thanks that former foes are now friends.

In Western Europe, the end of the Second World War meant liberation. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, the end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a painful chapter in history. Even as we acknowledge the past and confront the scourge of anti-Semitism, this anniversary is an opportunity to look forward and to build a future based on our shared values and shared responsibilities as free nations. Today, as we witness the rise of freedom around the world, we must take care to safeguard that dividend of peace. We must work with confidence to strengthen democracy at home and to advance freedom abroad.

President Bush was in Moscow today to honour the common sacrifice of millions of Americans, Europeans and many others during the war. His trip underscores the common commitment of the United States and our allies to work together to advance freedom, prosperity and tolerance, both in Europe and around the world. It is with a deep sense of gratitude, therefore, and with a determined will not forget, that the United States joins other Member States here today in honouring those who gave so much so that we all might enjoy the blessings of peace and liberty.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and many countries are celebrating that historic victory against fascism in a number of ways. The General Assembly has declared this to be a time of remembrance and reconciliation. The Chinese delegation welcomes this special solemn meeting of the General Assembly. We would like to take this opportunity to pay a high tribute to those courageous fighters who sacrificed their lives during the anti-fascist war. We also express profound condolences in connection with the sacrifices made by the heroic Red Army and by all the innocent victims of that war.

. This date 60 years ago witnessed the final defeat of the Nazi forces, which had been rampaging through the European continent. Three months later, the militarist aggressors that had savaged the Asia-Pacific region also surrendered. An enormous price had been paid by all the peace- and justice-loving peoples of the world. Countless people had been tortured to death in the Nazi concentration camps or slaughtered by military forces. The Second World War brought untold sorrow to humankind. Its scope and the loss of human life and property were unprecedented. The world's peoples finally claimed the victory of justice and a hard-won peace.

Today, in this Hall, we once again review and commemorate that historic event. Our purpose is to urge all peace-loving peoples not to forget that bloody war or to allow such a tragedy ever to happen again. Sixty years have passed since the end of the Second World War, and the seeds and peace are now deeply rooted in the hearts of the world's people. Tireless reconciliation efforts have also borne fruit and given rise to hope.

Nevertheless, we cannot fail to note that, even after 60 years, the ghosts of Naziism and militarism still linger. A handful of die-hard followers and some extreme right-wing forces and organizations are still trying v[illegible] to distort and deny past crimes in open defianc[illegible] human conscience. It is vital that the internati[illegible] community heighten its vigilance. Lessons learned from the past can guide us in the future. By using history as a mirror, we can reflect on shameful acts of the past in order to draw strength for the future. Today's special meeting will enable us not only to commemorate the victims of the Second World War, but, [illegible]ore important, to remember and face up to history and learn its lessons. Only in that way will we be able to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

The United Nations was born 60 years ago in the victorious aftermath of the anti-fascist world war. Today, the United Nations still shoulders the primary responsibility for preventing the ashes of war from rekindling, for maintaining world peace and stability and for promoting human progress and development.

Our Organization faces such new challenges as fighting terrorism and transnational crime, eradicating poverty and inequality and establishing a fair and equitable new international political and economic order. Humankind is at a new and historic, turning point, and the United Nations is at a crucial crossroads. Let us join hands once again in a spirit of unity and reconciliation and embrace the future of the whole of humanity so as to respond to new challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): Remembrance of the Second World War and of the unspeakable suffering that Germany brought upon its neighbours and, as a consequence, upon its own citizens, is a solemn duty for my country. Atonement has been a defining element of German identity ever since. Today, 60 years after the end of the war, we mourn all of those men, women and children who, civilians and soldiers alike, lost their lives, their loved ones or their health as victims of Nazi Germany. We have accepted full moral responsibility, and we ask for forgiveness for the suffering that was inflicted upon other peoples in the name of Germany. However large our efforts to assist victims have been over the past 60 years, we are aware of the impossibility of compensating for the enormity of that suffering.

At the same time, 8 May is a day of liberation for Europeans, including for Germans. Future generations will remember the year 1945 as the dawn of an era founded on the promise of the United Nations. Indeed, the United Nations Charter, with its ultimate goals of peace, welfare and human rights, attempts both to draw lessons from Germany's history during those fateful 12 years and to ensure that such events never recur.

In the decades after 1945 it took great effort, wisdom, persistence and, often, courage to gradually shape a better world — and it still does. Setbacks occurred almost immediately. Many will remember the immediate post-war period as bringing, among other things, years of additional suffering and renewed oppression, as well as a division of Europe and indeed the whole world.

For the Federal Republic of Germany, the end of the Second World War presented a unique opportunity for a fresh start, spiritually and politically, built on the cornerstones of human dignity and human rights. Germany was given an opportunity to achieve reconciliation with its neighbours and other partners and to contribute to a more peaceful world order. The United States, France and the United Kingdom extended their hands to us at crucial moments and in a

spirit of magnanimity and wisdom. The representative of Luxembourg, speaking on behalf of the European Union, pointed out how, to a great extent, European integration was both a vision to overcome the horrors of the past and a road map to achieving that vision.

With European and trans-Atlantic integration, we have drawn the lessons of the tragic first half of the twentieth century. The European Union has united former enemies and has brought political, economic and social stability and prosperity to all its members. Reconciliation with Russia and the other successor States of the former Soviet Union has a special significance, considering the enormous price their peoples paid during the war. In view of the suffering of the Baltic States, we have always felt a very special obligation to strongly support their inclusion in the Euro-Atlantic community. Poland was a victim of particularly brutal Nazi aggression; we are all the more grateful that our relationship with Poland has developed into a truly European friendship. That holds true also for our Central European partners.

Our responsibility for the Shoah, the ultimate crime against humanity in the twentieth century, entails a particular obligation for Germany towards the State of Israel. Our relationship with Israel has been and will always be a special one. Keeping alive the memory of the Shoah and regaining the friendship of Jews in Israel, in Germany and worldwide remains a task for present and future generations in Germany.

We have come a long way since 1945. In 1989 a peaceful revolution in the heart of Europe that brought about the end of the cold war was a point of culmination in our decades-long quest for reconciliation. It was, too, a fresh opportunity for the United Nations to uphold its founding principles, which were proclaimed while much of the world still lay in ruins: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to establish conditions under which human rights and justice can prosper and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

We can achieve those aspirations; we can build a safer, more just and more prosperous world; we can face the challenges of poverty, hunger, disease, despair, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction — if we learn the lessons of the past. They are, in the words of the Charter, to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace; to develop friendly relations among nations; to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character; and to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

The legacy of the horrors of the Second World War commands us to strive to attain those common goals together.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call now on the representative of Lithuania.

Mr. Šerkšnys (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania. We support the statement made by the Luxembourg presidency of the European Union. In that connection, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would like to emphasize the following points.

War is always a tragedy for people. The Second World War was a great tragedy and left deep scars. This May marks the sixtieth anniversary of the official end of the Second World War in Europe. Commemorating its end, we bow our heads and remember all the victims of the Second World War — the millions who perished in their towns and villages or on the battlefields and those who lost their lives in the death camps and gulags — and we remember with gratitude those who fought against dictatorship, oppression, racism and aggression.

As we commemorate the end of the Second World War, we also remember the legacy of that war and reveal the historically fair truth. The end of the Second World War marked the end of one totalitarian ideology: fascism. Yet another — totalitarian communism — expanded its domination. The end of the war resulted in the occupation and the renewed annexation of the three Baltic States by the Soviet Union. Therefore, the struggle for national freedom and justice was continued in our countries. In commemorating those who lost their lives during the Second World War, we must not fail to commemorate the crimes against humanity committed by both totalitarian regimes.

Remembering all victims of the Second World War and the Holocaust and remembering post-war

resistance and repression, we hope that forbearance and tolerance will become the universal principles of relations among States and their residents. Reconciliation based on truth and on an open and fair evaluation of the atrocities and consequences of the Second World War is the best proof that lessons have been drawn from the war.

We support the noble activities of the United Nations aimed at preventing tragedies like those of the twentieth century from happening again.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): We are gathered here today to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a monumental global conflict that wrought tremendous havoc on an unimaginable scale and that claimed some 50 million lives, etching a legacy of pain and suffering on our collective memories forever after. We also honour and pay tribute to those who sacrificed so much so that future generations could live in peace and human dignity.

The savagery and brutality of the Second World War was truly epic in scale, and it revealed to all the world the futility and horror of nation fighting nation, brother fighting brother. The war touched all continents and peoples, sparing no one from pain and suffering. Moreover, the genocide, the systematic human rights violations and the war crimes committed are stains upon the soul of mankind.

But today is not only a day for mourning. It is also a moment for us to reaffirm our collective responsibility — indeed our moral obligation — to work together so that such horrendous wars will never be repeated in the future.

The United Nations was built upon the ashes of the Second World War. Today it stands as the physical manifestation of the collective will of the international community to stem the scourge of war and to ensure that global peace and prosperity are never again shattered in such a heinous manner. Nevertheless, as we all know, threats to global peace and stability still abound. Persistent and horrific conflicts on several continents are claiming the lives of innocent civilians, especially the vulnerable. Terrorism poses a major threat to global peace, as does the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

To move toward a world free from fear and want that the drafters of the Charter dreamed of six decades ago, we must strengthen and further promote multilateral cooperation and dialogue, with the United Nations as the foundation. Disarmament and non-proliferation efforts must continue.

Along with remembrance and respect for the dead, perhaps our most important task today is to forge a foundation of genuine reconciliation by overcoming the unfortunate past that the Second World War left us. Indeed, true reconciliation is a prerequisite for enhancing international cooperation, promoting democratic values and strengthening human rights and fundamental freedoms, all of which will promise us a future of global peace and prosperity.

In this regard, I feel it is my solemn duty, as a citizen of a country that suffered greatly during the Second World War, to underscore the necessity for true, sincere and genuine atonement by those who breached the peace and began our descent into a global nightmare. True atonement requires more than just verbal apologies. Words of genuine apology should be translated into actions. In this regard, any attempt to distort history would set back the goal of reconciliation. Glossing over past wrongdoings and glorifying the perpetrators of atrocities prevent a true and lasting reconciliation.

Moreover, failing to educate younger generations about the true horror of the war deprives them of the right to know the truth about their forebears that they rightfully deserve. There is only one way we can ever hope to truly move beyond the lingering misgivings concerning the past, and that is to squarely face up to — and repent for — history.

As we move into the twenty-first century and beyond, the goal of the international community, with the United Nations in a lead role, is to promote and strengthen the universal values of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. To achieve these goals, we must first reaffirm our commitment to respect the fundamental dignity and right to live in peace to which all peoples and nations are entitled.

On the sixtieth anniversary of the Second World War, the Republic of Korea stands here today to reiterate its unwavering support for the fundamental purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We also express our sincere desire for true reconciliation throughout the world, without which

the new partnership for peace and prosperity that we all cherish will never be fully realized.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call upon the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): One cannot speak without emotion about the victory in the Great Patriotic War. The greatness of that event carries with it a truly fateful significance for all of humankind. The Great Victory was achieved at the cost of untold efforts by peoples and of unfulfilled human lives. We have always remembered this and will continue to remember it. Victory was achieved through the efforts of the peoples of many countries, and today this commemorative day is broadly observed by all peoples who have lived through the hell of war and who have suffered the most horrid ordeals and deprivations caused military frenzy.

The 8th and 9th of May have been proclaimed by the world Organization as days of remembrance and reconciliation. The greatest sacrifices in the history of humankind for the sake of freedom, untold deprivations and sufferings, mass heroism and the valour of our fighters — liberators — the hard work done in the rear and the unity and persistence of peoples were guarantees for complete victory over the forces of evil.

United on the fronts of the Second World War, more than 360,000 of the finest sons and daughters of Kyrgyzstan fought. They covered themselves with unfading glory, and the names of many of them will be written in gold in the history of the most sacred of wars — the Patriotic War. For showing exemplary courage, thousands of representatives of Kyrgyzstan were awarded high State honours.

I would especially like to point out the contribution to the achievement of the Great Victory by the workers in the rear. From the outset of the war the industry of Kyrgyzstan was restructured for wartime production, and the entire agricultural sector of the Republic was working for the front. Those who had gone to the front were replaced by women, adolescents and older people. They took over the machinery, went into action and took the driver's seat on the tractors.

The years go by and so do the decades, carrying us ever farther from the spring of 1945, but the heroic deeds of the veterans will never fade from people's memory. Victory Day is the most important, most patriotic day. It combines courage and greatness, sorrow and tears. Our fathers and grandfathers, brothers and sisters, at the cost of their own lives, granted us and the world the opportunity to live free and independent. We will remember their great deed in our hearts, and their example compels us to new achievements and to new heights for the sake of peace.

Today all of progressive humanity is looking to the United Nations, where key issues in the development of the Organization's activities are being discussed. We are not far from the date when we will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the unique world Organization, which has become a common home for people all over the planet. Over the years of the Organization's existence the world has changed radically, and there have been far-reaching changes in the international situation as well. The world sighed with relief after the end of a devastating war, but that war was replaced by new threats and challenges, first and foremost terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Today we need to take steps to breathe new life into the United Nations and provide a new quality so that it might be able to respond adequately to events in a quickly changing world.

Time is relentless. The ranks of the veterans of the Second World War are dwindling, and it is our sacred duty to be worthy of their achievements, to support the heroes who fought on the front, the heroes who toiled in the rear, and surround them with warmth and attention. To be their successors is not only a high honour but also an enormous responsibility.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Tesch (Australia): It is with sorrow but also sober pride that Australia joins with other nations in marking the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945.

When war was declared in September 1939, our young nation was quick to respond to the threat from tyranny, honouring an historical alliance with the United Kingdom and the deep friendships we had forged with countries that had been our allies during the First World War. Australians served with courage and distinction throughout the war, in every theatre. Although most of our forces were recalled in 1942 to face a new, direct threat to our own shores, many remained, serving alongside Britons, Poles, Canadians, South Africans and people of many other nationalities

until peace in Europe was finally declared. Tragically, that peace did not save the lives of many others who continued to fight and die in the Pacific for another four or five months.

As others before me have reminded us, this Organization, of which Australia is proud to have been a founding Member, arose in response to the tragic conflagration which engulfed the world between 1939 and 1945. Sixty years later, the Charter of the United Nations remains eloquent testimony to the goals that united the world then and which continue to guide and inspire us. As we remember those men and women who fought, suffered and died, and the innocents who perished, we must pledge to be worthy of their legacy and ensure that their service and sacrifice were not in vain.

The task we all have in this sixtieth anniversary year is to bend our efforts to a common purpose once more: to ensure that this Organization evolves to meet new threats and overcome the challenges posed by poverty, disease, war, terrorism and the denial of fundamental human rights. It is Australia's firm hope and conviction that, through united efforts, we can do that and that we can prove ourselves to be worthy of those who have gone before us.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): In the history of humankind, remembrance and reconciliation, the bitter memory of past wounds and losses, are often an insurmountable wall in the minds of individuals and entire peoples. However, sometimes the very same memory leads to repentance and forgiveness, peace and agreement.

My country lost millions of its citizens in the war. Every fourth citizen of Belarus perished. For my compatriots, it was not just another world war; it was the Great Fatherland War. To this day, and with unabated pain, Belarussians recall the victims who gave their lives for the sake of victory over Naziism. Time has not fully healed the deep wounds in the hearts and souls of our people.

Today, we can firmly aver that, for Belarus, there are no enemy States in the world. Moreover, Belarus sincerely hopes that the very concept of war may one day be banished not just from the Charter of our Organization, but also from the practice of international relations. However, the latter task would appear to be far more daunting than the former.

Each of us draws his or her own lessons from the events of the past. For Belarus, which was literally burned to the ground in the fires of a world war, the main lesson drawn was the understanding that such an event must never recur. That is a simple, yet — as recent events have demonstrated — hardly an obvious lesson. The nightmare of war and the suffering and death of millions compelled humankind to shudder.

Sixty years ago, the international community found within itself the strength and courage to rise above mutual mistrust, demands and accusations. On the basis of a fraternal front of allied powers, it was able to create a new system of international relations, the key principle of which — the non-use and the non-threat of use of force — is enshrined in the United Nations Charter. What new upheaval must shake the foundations of our world for us to grasp once again — as our predecessors did in 1945 — the enormous meaning and value of that principle?

The victors of the last world war cherished their convictions no less than we do ours. No less than we, each was certain that its course was the right one. They often entertained conflicting ideas, but they agreed on the main issue: the sacred endeavour, at whatever cost, to preserve life on Earth. What must occur for us once again to shudder as we did and to strive to overcome the natural temptation to yield to age-old historical offences? What will force us seriously to consider which of our noble desires can truly help to preserve life on Earth, and which will only spur humankind on to the abyss of self-destruction?

We are all different. Sometimes we may even be too different to address that issue, but if we wish to continue to live in this world, we will have to do so together and in peace. Understanding and applying that simple truth is the very least we can do in order truly to commemorate the memory of those who perished in the last world war.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of France.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): Sixty years ago, peace finally prevailed at the end of one of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of humankind. It is right that today we honour the memory of all of the victims of that atrocious war. It is

just that we pay tribute to all of those — the famous and the unknown — who fought and triumphed for freedom throughout the world.

Sixty years ago, a new hope was born for Europe, then devastated and exhausted, with its deepest beliefs shaken. In a few years, Franco-German reconciliation, the trans-Atlantic alliance and the building of Europe enabled our continent to renew the loftiest traditions of its civilization. Europeans resumed their full place among the nations.

Sixty years ago, a new hope was also born for the world. It is to the credit of the United States and others that they laid the basis for the United Nations. As it still does today, the Organization responded to a profound aspiration of peoples. The United Nations Charter finally provided Governments with a sound basis for effective collective security.

Sixty years later, we have more reason than ever to remain faithful to the ideals of the Charter. The conclusion of decolonization has placed all peoples on an equal footing. The end of the East-West conflict, long a factor of paralysis for our Organization, launched a new era. Throughout the world, human rights, democracy and the rule of law are recognized as the necessary keystones for the flourishing of individuals and human societies. For example, over the past 15 years, the progress of international justice has made the world less secure for dictators and those who trample on human rights.

In that new context, Europe is an excellent example of cooperation among peoples who were once enemies. An expanded Europe, which maintains a relationship of trust with Russia, uses its influence and strength to promote peace and equilibrium. Other regional forums also play a fundamental role, foremost among them being the African Union.

The world has changed. The extreme threats of the cold war have been contained. New threats have emerged with the increased threat posed by terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, widespread poverty — which still affects too many countries — major pandemics, assaults on the environment and organized crime. All those threats have become subjects of major concern for people, and are joined by unresolved conflicts, regional tensions and ongoing internal upheavals.

If we really want to remain faithful to the memory of the victims and heroes of the Second World War, we must devote all our energy to achieve the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations. There is no other realistic response to the old and new threats at the beginning of the twenty-first century than to act in a multilateral context. It is for that reason that it is so important to work to modernize the Organization. The September summit will be a historic opportunity to promote development, security and human rights, thereby providing the response to old and new threats that our peoples expect. It will be a unique opportunity to modernize the Organization. It is therefore incumbent upon us that we honour the promises that, 60 years ago in the rubble of the most appalling conflict, gave rise to hope among the peoples of the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Nigeria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): The African Group joins other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, for convening this special solemn plenary meeting as part of the activities to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. This occasion calls for sober reflection and for deep gratitude to those who paid the ultimate price, as well as for reconciliation with all the victims of that dark chapter in the history of mankind.

Sixty years ago, on 8 May 1945, the Second World War ended in Europe. The end of that terrible calamity not only led people to hope for the return of prisoners, deportees and refugees, it also awakened a desire to build a better Europe and a better, fairer and safer world. The Second World War was not only a historical event of the first order, it also marked a turning point for humankind in our time.

Today, as we celebrate 60 years of the triumph of good over evil, and as we pay tribute to the memories of the brave and courageous men, women and children, including Africans from countries then unborn, whose sacrifices made victory a reality, peace a possibility and our freedom secure, we should remember that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that the tragedy that befell the world between 1939 and 1945 does not occur again. We should remain vigilant.

The memories of the war must not grow dim, but should become a stern lesson for our generation and for

generations yet unborn. To that end, we should keep in our memory all that took place during those horrible years. That is our duty. Our Organization was born out of the ashes of the Second World War to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person. We should recommit ourselves today to strengthen our Organization to fully empower it to discharge those noble objectives. To that end, the African Group expresses its determination to continue to work, in fruitful cooperation and in concert with others, to ensure that our global Organization is sufficiently strengthened to maintain international peace and security and to encourage development and respect for the rights and dignity of all persons, as envisaged in the reform proposals initiated by the Secretary-General.

Sixty years after the end of the Second World War, the world has continued to witness acts of hatred and discrimination based on religious, political, racial, ethnic, social or cultural differences. Although the world has not seen anything in the magnitude of the events of the Second World War, it is sad to note that the culture of hatred has persisted and has been the cause of many conflicts throughout the world, including the tragic events in Cambodia, Rwanda and Yugoslavia. We watched with horror as those terrible episodes unfolded, as if we had learned nothing from 1945. The world has also witnessed an unprecedented rise in, and sophistication of, acts of terrorism. We are reminded daily of the dangerous world we live in by images of mutilated bodies and destroyed cars and buildings resulting from terrorist activities in various parts of the world perpetrated by those who have ceased to value human life. The international community must not be daunted or intimidated by those brazen assaults on our collective psyche.

As a community of nations faced with fresh threats and challenges, we must reassert ourselves towards a new vision for mankind. We should boldly move forward to ensure that the founding principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations — which commit all Members to protect human life and dignity and to ensure respect for universal human rights and freedoms as a foundation for peace, security and development — do not become mere words of intent. The African Group is committed to the ideals of the United Nations and seizes this occasion to reaffirm the importance members of the Group attach to the United Nations and its principles as enshrined in the Charter. The African Group hopes that this special plenary meeting will enable us to draw lessons from the past that will serve us as a guide for the future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Japan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): Mr. President, we appreciate your convening this special meeting to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Japan joins other Member States in paying tribute to all the victims of the Second World War. This is a solemn occasion to reflect upon the lessons learned from the war as well as upon the path of international cooperation and understanding that has been followed during the past 60 years of the life of the United Nations. It should also be an occasion for us to renew our resolve to strengthen our common efforts towards peace for the world in the twenty-first century.

The leaders of many nations are gathered in a ceremony in Moscow today, embracing the spirit of remembrance and reconciliation, the same spirit in which this special meeting of the General Assembly has been organized. The Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, is among the leaders attending that ceremony.

Twice in the first half of the twentieth century, the world went through the unspeakable horrors of war, and humankind experienced untold suffering, misery and sorrow. That must not be repeated. Mistakes made in our history must be remembered, and we must learn from them and resolve never to allow them to happen again. Only by learning from the past can humankind make progress in the future.

Japan has made its own mistakes in its recent history. Prime Minister Koizumi stated recently, on the occasion of the Asian-African Summit held in Indonesia last month, that

> "In the past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. Japan squarely faces those facts of history in a spirit of humility. And with feelings of deep remorse and a heartfelt apology always engraved in its mind, Japan has, since the end of the Second World War, resolutely and consistently maintained its

principle of resolving all matters by peaceful means, without recourse to the use of force, never turning into a military but an economic power. Japan once again states its resolve to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world in the future as well, prizing the relationship of trust it enjoys with the nations of the world."

In that spirit, the Japanese people have striven since the end of the war to rebuild their nation as a free, democratic and peace-loving nation. Peace treaties and other international agreements were concluded with former belligerent States, and the obligations assumed were fully and sincerely implemented. Our people worked hard to recover from the devastation done to our country, to reconstruct our institutions and to rebuild our industrial base. In the early phase of that national recovery, our people and our nation received generous support and assistance from the international community. We remember that, and we are truly grateful.

Since becoming a Member of the United Nations in 1956, Japan has made assiduous efforts to contribute to the ideals and the objectives of the Organization, ranging from development, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to disarmament, arms control, conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations.

That was, in part, a way of giving back to the international community, but it is more a reflection of the genuine desire of my country to dedicate itself faithfully to promoting the ideals and objectives enshrined in the Charter. We are proud of that record, and we will continue on that path, working together with all Member States in Asia and around the world.

The United Nations was created with the determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and it is now embraced by all nations of the world as the universal institution, transcending diverse political, economic, geographic and historical backgrounds. Today, 60 years after its inception, the world has changed dramatically, and this world body must modernize and reform itself accordingly if it is to deal effectively with the problems and challenges of the twenty-first century.

The time of remembrance and reconciliation must also be a time of resolve to ensure that this universal Organization and the multilateralism that it embodies maintain the peace, stability and prosperity of the world and serve the interests and welfare of the greatest possible numbers of humankind. Japan's own resolve towards that end remains strong and unchanged.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): The Holy See is grateful to you, Mr. President, and the sponsors of resolution 59/26 for this opportunity officially to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. There is no doubt that it was a terrible conflict, and it is both salutary and sobering to recall that it was the worst of several unnecessary, man-made global catastrophes that made the twentieth century one of the most bitter that humanity has ever known.

My delegation salutes the declaration by the United Nations contained in that resolution, which designates 8 and 9 May as days of remembrance and reconciliation. Many voices rightly admonish us not to forget, but such voices do not place guilt at the door of today's generations. Rather, they demand responsibility, reinforced by a knowledge of the mistakes of the past, and responsibility in view of those previous catastrophes requires us to develop some considerations.

First, among the roots of the Second World War was the exaltation of State and race and of the proud self-sufficiency of humanity based on the manipulation of science, technology and force. The rule of law was no longer a vehicle for the application of justice, teaching us that when man loses sight of his transcendent aspirations, he quickly reduces himself and others to an object, a number and even a mere commodity.

Secondly, even if we accept that under some circumstances, a limited and strictly conditioned use of force might be inevitable in order to fulfil the responsibility of all States and the international community to protect, we are called to be realistic enough to recognize that peaceful resolutions are possible and that no effort should be spared in achieving them.

Humanity has long pondered the morality of war and the ethical conduct of combatants. The Secretary-General's report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) urges the Security Council to adopt a resolution on the legitimacy and the legality of the use

of force. Recognition of the tragic and devastating nature of war and the common responsibility for past and present conflicts press us to question not only whether war can be legal and legitimate, but, above all, whether it is avoidable. For that reason, the different chapters of the Secretary-General's report should be treated as an ensemble. Global peace and security will be achieved only if the international community respects human life and dignity and is committed to the social and economic development of every country and every man, woman and child.

Thirdly, the Second World War, as do all the wars of the twentieth century, illustrates how war-termination policies and post-war operational planning are essential to restoring justice and peace and to protecting. In the past, much attention was rightly paid to *ius ad bellum* — the necessary conditions for justifying the use of force — and to *ius in bello* — the legal parameters of ethical behaviour during war. In the light of the material and moral devastation of the Second World War and the nature of war since then, the time has come to focus on and develop a third dimension of the law of war: *ius post bellum* — how to achieve quickly and effectively the establishment of a just and lasting peace, which is the only admissible goal of the use of force.

Thus, the existing international legal instruments covering conduct and activities after war need to be reinforced and extended with reference to our rapidly changing times while also taking into consideration the ethical parameters that the modern conscience and modern sensitivities have developed, such as reconciliation to help all parties involved restore bonds of friendship and neighbourliness, assurance of the security and the stabilization of nations emerging from war, international solidarity in the process of socio-economic reconstruction of the fabric of those societies, restoration of the environment after fighting has ceased, and justice at every level, since, if force has been employed for justice's sake, justice must surely influence every aspect of the peacebuilding process.

Fourthly, new emphasis has recently been placed on the role of the United Nations as a peacebuilder. The Holy See shares the Secretary-General's concern that the United Nations system should fully address the challenge of helping countries with the transition from war to lasting peace and once again expresses full support for the creation of an intergovernmental peacebuilding commission.

This commemoration is therefore a welcome reminder of the very raison d'être of the United Nations. Although nowadays it exercises its functions in a broad variety of fields, those activities should not distract us from the sine qua non of the Organization's existence, that is, the quest for peace among nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker on the list for the special solemn meeting in commemoration of all the victims of the Second World War.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 158?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.